1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

bade asking direct questions of a stranger. A Rueyli called out: "Khalati—it is a great prince who comes, O blessed daughter, to honour thee."

"And where is his *dira* (pasture) that I may send Hamar, our old slave, to proclaim him to our neighbour?"

"His name is 'The Young Falcon', and his *dira* extends as far as his eyes rove. It is thy son, O mother of Amir Fuaz."

In this foray, Rasheyd, the leader, had his right hand severed by a sword cut. He fainted from loss of blood. Our slaves then plunged the mutilated arm in boiling fat—a desperate remedy but successful, for Rasheyd recovered. He carried his amputated hand from that day forward in the saddle of his racing-camel. It dried up completely, like the hand of a mummy.

When we reached Bahr Saigal, not far from Dumeyr, the first Turkish fortress in Syria, its Commandant sent a cavalry detachment to our camp. He had been informed by telegraph of our illicit operations in the vicinity of the cultivated lands of Mesopotamia. His troopers were seeking Rasheyd, who was to be made answerable. But Rasheyd could not reconcile himself to the prospect of a Turkish dungeon. He placed his withered hand in a leather bag and dictated to Nauaf's *katib* (scribe) the following letter addressed to the Commandant at Dumeyr:

"In the name of the Benevolent and Compassionate! As *askar* (soldier) I cannot serve thy *Padishah* (Sultan), for I have but a stump of an arm. As thy prisoner I could do no work for thee; nay, as a friend I could not

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685
648

even grasp thy hand. What use then being with thee? As a token of my everlasting surrender, however, I offer to thee my hand, since thou art wont to cut off the hand of a thief. Be sure it is my own hand—the hand of Rasheyd-ibn-Whafa, the robber. May God be forbearing with us."

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731x 221x on unconcerned, without a check. The man remaining behind would cut up the camel in a few minutes, then hurry on to catch up with the tribe, leaving only the entrails, the head and legs, on the trampled ground.

The losses in the camel herds increased day by day. From some hundreds a day they had risen to sinister figures. According to Fuaz, two thousand camels died or had to be killed daily.

[721] Onward, ever onward; though hostile tribes made some attempt to stem this tide of hungry men and beasts, and the Saba and the Fid'an drove off a few of the smaller herds, the main body of the Ruala was as yet safe from attack. But isolated skirmishes and small raids grew in number the farther the Ruala drew away from the independent domain of Ibn Sa'ûd, and passing through Transjordania, penetrated into Syria. There indeed the situation threatened to become serious. French aeroplanes droned over the restless sea of men and beasts, but so far only scouting planes were out, seeking to ascertain the strength of the invading Ruala host.

731x 648 721 The "Fransawi" could not, without some protest, permit a whole nation of warlike Bedouins to roam so far beyond its own ground and invade Syria. The settlers in the French mandated territory were already shaking for fear of war among the Bedouin tribes, and were making preparations for the defence of their villages and fields. The Druses, on the contrary, warlike people of the Hauran Mountains, were perhaps rejoicing in anticipation of a new turmoil in Syria, from which they might hope to gain more than they had from the last. In that quarrel the Ruala, hereditary enemies of the Druses, did

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not take sides against the French. The French authorities immediately realized the danger, and promptly gave orders that the ancient caravan route from Damascus to Tudmur (Palmyra) and Deyr-ez-Zor (which passes south of the hills of the Abu Rijmeyn and branches off near Tudmur towards Baghdad) was to form the most northerly boundary beyond which the Ruala might not seek pasture. None must cross this line if armed or mounted.

Now the foes of the Ruala could triumph!

The Saba, the Muwali, Hadediyyin and all the others had the law of the land and the power of the French Government on their side—and they were confederates of Ibn Meheyd! What did they care for the misery of the Ruala? They only saw at hand a long-desired opportunity to fall upon and destroy this hated Ruala nation and take possession of their vast herds.

It was a day in April, when our distress seemed to have reached the last extremity beyond which endurance could not go—when death stared every man and animal in the face—that I entered the tent of Faris, which was pitched on a hillock a little apart. The tent was empty. The mother and sister of the young man were probably searching for truffles, roots and dry herbs for fuel. As I flung myself down by the glowing ashes inside the tent, I heard the voice of Faris ibn Naif-behind the tent. It was loud and excited, which was an unusual thing for him, for the calm and self-control of my friend had always been exemplary. He was neither a Philistine nor a bigot, but a man of a moral purity such as I never found surpassed, even among the Bedouins. I

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"No longer sad, for Allah will no longer shut us out from the blessings of His heaven."

At this moment we saw Amir Fuaz with his mounted bodyguard ride past. They saw us also and came over and sat down in the tent.

In the course of the conversation, Faris said to the young Amir: "Let Aziz and me travel to thy enemies and treat with them. If they give in and share their pastureland with us, the French will then make no objections."

With some anger the young Amir fixed his eyes on Faris and cried: "We shall act, but no longer treat with them. We shall take what we want of our enemy's pasturage. Without forage there can be no camels, and without camels no life for us. Hast thou not perceived that?"

"I understand," said Faris, in his gentle way. "Is it then no longer a custom with us that one may beg his life, even of the enemy when compelled by need? Truly the path of peace is shorter than the long road on which lurks destruction."

Fuaz did not answer—and all the others in the tent held their peace. Suddenly, however, the young Prince got up, strode over to the slave who was watering his mare from a goatskin, mounted and rode away.

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XVI

A New Lease of Life

●648 A NEW DEVELOPMENT BROUGHT a glint of hope that extreme measures might be avoided. A message arrived from the Commandant at Rutbah, in British territory, Muhammed Yassin Bey, inviting Amir Fuaz to a conference in that town; he, Yassin Bey, was ready to treat with the Head of the Ruala concerning their admission to pastures and wells in Iraq.

Fuaz decided to accept the invitation. If he could reach an agreement with Yassin Bey, and this was approved by the British authorities—who otherwise must disavow their own official—it would mean that the whole tribe could pass the summer securely near the Euphrates. So he would go to Rutbah. It would be a last attempt to save his people from their desperate plight by peaceable means.

Further news, however, clouded this prospect. An emissary, actually a spy, of the Ruala returned to our camp with the intelligence that Yassin Bey meant treachery, that his invitation was a trap; once in Rutbah Amir Fuaz would be taken prisoner or quietly assassinated. This account was confirmed by a letter from a devoted confidant of the Ruala in Rutbah, who was a soldier in the Camel Corps there. He claimed to possess knowledge of secret instructions issued by the Commandant, and his statements generally squared with the spy's. I could not, however, quite believe it. That Yassin Bey, con-

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sidering his position, should contemplate such action seemed to me on the face of it unlikely, and the show of evidence was not good enough; it was too much like rumour.

The matter was discussed at length in council. The Amir's half-brother, Mijhem, expressed his conviction that there was grave danger of a trap, and urged the utmost wariness. His plan was that Fuaz should set out with a single chosen attendant skilled in spying, and stop a safe distance this side of Rutbah. There Fuaz should keep in hiding while his companion made his way unobtrusively into the fortress in order to ascertain the truth of the situation. My advice was different. I suggested to Fuaz that he should leave Rutbah severely alone and go right on to Baghdad, to negotiate with the British high authorities directly. Mijhem spoke against my counsel, and Amir Fuaz rejected it.

The upshot of it all was the adoption of Mijhem's plan. Fuaz started by motor-car for Rutbah immediately after the council, taking with him Mijhem himself. For the time of his absence, the Amir transferred the command of the tribe to his uncle, Tra'd ibn Sattam. The same day word came from our rear that the tail of the Ruala had also crossed the border, so that the whole nomad nation was now in Syria.

Every day the whole tribe must shift camp. When I got up at the first rays of the sun, this was already in progress. The camel-herd was gone from my tent row. The spacious abodes of our temporary leader, Tra'd ibn Sattam, and his three sons had been taken down, slaves

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000 I, and two slaves—had consequences which we did not then anticipate.

[487] We held a straight northerly course until we crossed
• [648] the old Tudmur-Baghdad caravan route—"The Road of Death", as the Ruala had come to call it since the French Administration had forbidden them to cross it. Their camps were already within thirty-odd miles of it.

The scenery changed after we had passed beyond this "boundary." With a hardly perceptible gradient, the wide plain rose toward distant hills. White clouds sailed in the blue sky—a long-missed and promising sight, for it was the first sign of rain we had seen for weeks. Herbage was visibly thriving here, thicker and much taller, and there were flowers. The farther we advanced into the North and the uplands, the richer became the vegetation; and many wild fowl and also some gazelles started up at our approach.

We pushed on through the virgin grasslands without stopping at a speed of twenty-five to forty miles an hour, in spite of mounds and hills rising in close succession, until we had travelled perhaps a hundred and twenty-five miles from our base—not, however, in a straight line, for I (who had the wheel) had made many a wide detour to avoid the enemy's tents. Now and then we had sighted enemy bands, sometimes appearing with startling suddenness, and had been fired at. But we were always out of range, and without being harmed or having to answer the fire, we reached, in the afternoon, the pastures of Nethel in the upland steppe among the northern hills of the Abu Rijmeyn.

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coming and going, when a well-known voice called for coffee. Unnoticed by any of us, Amir Fuaz had entered and sat down. "Thank Heaven you are back," I exclaimed. "I'll gladly surrender my position to you"; and I offered him the place of honour. 731x 221x

Fuaz had returned from Rutbah empty-handed. The suspicion of treachery on the part of Yassin Bey had indeed proved groundless; but the French insisted on their previous decision and the English expressed lack of interest. Nothing had been gained. [648]

At this juncture I proposed to Fuaz to let me try to bring about an understanding with his Bedouin enemies, but it was only with much difficulty that he could be moved to give his assent—not that he had anything against my personal interference in the affairs of his tribe, but because he feared that such a step towards conciliation would be interpreted by the enemy as a sign of weakness. It was only after I had talked to him for a long time, trying to ease his mind, that he said quite suddenly: "Well then, in the name of God, go to Ibn Meheyd. Was not my brother-in-law always thy friend?" He sent for Mijhem (his half-brother) and Faris, and instructed them to accompany me on my mission. For our bodyguards he detailed Mnahi and a friend of Faris, one Abd el-Karim, a Wuld'Ali chieftain from Syria, and the latter's slave, Sleyman.

We used Nuri Sha'lan's open car for our trip, and we avoided all camel-riders, especially when they had horses with them.

Early in the afternoon we sought out a secluded wind-

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

right hand he holds his staff or a rifle, to which he ties his kerchief for a flag, and points it in the direction of the threatening danger. *Ḥṣân* always means a stallion, *faras* a mare, *ḫejl* horses in general. The *ḥṣân* is, as a rule, more enduring than the mare. *Al-ḥṣân balad* means "the stallion became tired," implying that he stopped moving owing to oversweating or because he was so weakened by heat and thirst that he could not escape from the enemy hard in pursuit of him. *Zaban*, he protected, took his part. He that is threatened with death or is in fear of an avenger asks the protection of one more powerful, who will then shield and bring him to a place where he can live in peace, *zabaneh*.

Jâ 'ejâl dukḳû-l-barûd
lel-moṛrebi muḫḫ al-ḥadîd
lâ budd min jowmen ja'ûd
jafroḳ wadîden 'an wadîd.

My sons, pound the powder;
For al-Moṛrebi we need steel,
And the day is sure to come
Which will take the lover
from his sweetheart.

A Turkish officer, known to the Rwala only by the name of al-Moṛrebi, was in command of the regular troops who drove back the Bedouins whenever they tried to encamp in the settled territory. This happened in the seventies of the last century, when it was the policy of the Turkish Government to protect the *fellâḥîn* from the Bedouins. The Rwala, who had lost many men, thirsted for revenge and as they could go neither to Syria nor to Irak they manufactured their powder themselves. *Muḫḫ al-ḥadîd* is steel. They wished to shoot al-Moṛrebi with a steel bullet, thinking that an ordinary one of lead would not kill him.

Narmi-l-'aḍa benḥûrhen laṭ-ṭejr
w-en kunkubb al-adnas wara'
bemdenḍelîten ṣan'ahen bed-dejr
berḥab 'adlât al-ḫeṣa'.

Before the throats [of the she-camels] we shall throw
their supper to the birds of prey,
Though the base one still lingers behind;
With spears adorned with chains made at ad-Dejr
[Driven] into the necks of mares fed from the new crop.

Benḥûrhen means the confusion of galloping camels and also their throats. Our riders are loath to retreat; they want